

M. Waldegrave

8

THE

AGE OF GENIUS!

A

SATIRE ON THE TIMES.

IN A

POETICAL EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

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LONDON:

Printed for HARRISON and Co. N^o 18, Paternoster-Row.

M D C C LXXXVI.

LAUNCHED NO 3 P.D.A

23/11/1910 - M.G. MITRA



P R E F A C E.

I Am not unaware that some of the sentiments in the following Pages will prove discordant to prevailing opinions; but as every author does, or is *supposed* to, deliver his *own thoughts*, these are presented under *that* title. If the Poem possesses merit, that merit will be it's *own index* with *real* judges, and survive all the attacks of false criticism: if, on the contrary, it should be found destitute, instead of transmitting it's author's name to *posterity*, it will as certainly sink into *oblivion*; a circumstance which every *unsuccessful* writer, not as void of understanding as of literary talents, will deem the *more tolerable fate*.

P R E F A C E

In the first instance that took place of the documents in the following page will prove difficult to decipher, but as every single one of them is necessary to establish the new authority which the people of this country have taken up, it is to be hoped that the reader will be able to do so. The first document is the title of the city charter, and contains all the articles of the original charter. It is to be observed that the title of the city charter is the same as that of the town charter, and that the town charter is the same as that of the city charter. The second document is the town charter, and contains all the articles of the town charter. The third document is the town charter, and contains all the articles of the town charter.

THE
AGE OF GENIUS!

AN

EPISTLE TO A FRIEND.

YOU, my *dear friend*, whom art and talents grace,
Which only to your *principles* yield place;
Who by your *own* know genius' *real flame*,
And, in your *own*, enjoy a *well-earn'd fame*;
You, list'ning to my *temporary song*,
Shall judge, and tell me if I'm *right or wrong*. 5

WHEN our *grave* grandfires talk of those *rare times*,
Ere *modern* follies sprung, or *modern* crimes;

B

When

When all were *chastely* honest, *greatly* good;
 Untempted, or temptation still withstood; 10
 When patriotism in *patriots* found support,
 And Virtue at St. James's kept her *court* ;
 When nought but for the *public good* was done ;
 Ere kings believ'd the *many* made for *one* ;
 When viewing in their King the common weal, 15
 The *many* felt for *one* a loyal zeal;
 When ev'ry heart beat *Amor Patriæ*,
 And Britain's *strength* was Britain's *liberty* ;
 Ere *lower* ranks were mingled with the *higher*,
 Or trade to dissipation *dar'd* aspire; 20
 Ere linsey-woolsey gowns were thrown aside,
 To deck, in lace and lustring, *female pride* ;
 Ere *old* men wore their *hair*, when *young* ones *wigs* ;
 Ere *cits* kept country boxes, and their *gigs* ;
 When lords and ladies *honour'd* their degree, 25
 All *things* and *men*, what *men* and *things* should be :
 When you hear *this*; when also you reflect,
 All times, in turn, partake the *same* respect;

That

That just like living poets, *present days*,
 Whate'er their *merit*, know no *present praise*;
 That, past and gone, like works of authors dead,
 Times are extoll'd whose *worthies* wanted *bread*:
 When you reflect on *this*, tho' *grief'd* the while,
 The *folly* cannot chuse but make you *smile*!

30

BUT yet, again, (distinction's line to draw)

35

Tho' *dotage* thus to preach, we know no law
 Binds us to think *past* times *few* virtues had,
 Or, *having* few, that *these* are not as *bad*.
Some faults, *some* foibles, certainly *we* have;
Some fools, *some* coxcombs—*here* and *there*, a knave.
 Some *few* erroneous notions *now* prevail:
These let us weigh, my friend, in Reason's scale.

40

THE times *have* been when *genius* was so *rare*,
 The learn'd would *rev'rence*, and the ign'rant *stare*,
 If beaming from above the blessing fell,
 And bade some fav'rite happily excel:

45

The

The man with virtue and true genius fir'd,
 Was prais'd by *all*, and by the wife *admir'd* ;
 Beholding in the gift it's SACRED SOURCE,
 All honour'd, cherish'd, and confess'd it's force : 50
 From heav'n alone it came, and came to few,
 Nor from the steril root of *labour* grew.
 Of genius *now* (blest age !) the *diff'rent* lot!
 All *think* they have it—nay, who has it *not*?
 In *courts* it shines, in *senates*, and the *schools*, 55
 And *clears* the world of *dunces* and of *fools* !
 Spreads, flourishes, and favours unconfin'd ;
 One *common* benefit to *all mankind* !
 In *this* opinion young and *old* abide,
 What genius *is*, is all they can't *decide*. 60
 Some, at the most, a *knack* conceive it all ;
 Or well to *write*, or well to *catch a ball*,
 An *equal* object of their *admiration*,
 As *sure* a title to their *approbation* :
 These undertake to prove it only *toil*, 65
 Denying all *diversity* of *soil* ;

Nature, with *them*, has no distinction made,
 And fruit *must* follow Application's spade:
 While others, (and by much the greater part)
 Tho' they allow it not *depends* on art, 70
 By labour *still* aver it may be gain'd ;
 Or something *very similar* attain'd.
 Hence, of *all* maxims, which more trite than *this*—
 ‘ Study the more, if Nature is remiss ?’
 Guided by *this*, the million's led away ; 75
 Guided by *this*, hear what the million say !—

- ‘ ART thou not blest with genius *labour free* ?’
- ‘ By *labour* then, at least, a genius be ;’
- ‘ Practice makes perfect—Nature *still* is kind,’
- ‘ If to her offers we're not *idly* blind. 80
- ‘ Nature is *coy* but to be su'd with *art* ;’
- ‘ Then be it *thine* to act the suitor's part.’
- ‘ Still as she *frowns*, more ardent court her *smile* ;’
- ‘ And seek her favours at the hand of *Toil*.’

- ‘ Has she with sparing hand supplied thy *cup*? 85
- ‘ Pour in from *Learning’s*, then, and *fill it up*:
- ‘ The more thou add’st to what was giv’n before,
- ‘ Be sure in future, she will give the more;
- ‘ In shape of *Genius* will her blessings show’r;
- ‘ Shew what in *her’s* and what in *Learning’s* pow’r; 90
- ‘ Prove that to Knowledge Wit is still allied,
- ‘ That *Labour’s* suit is never *long* denied,
- ‘ That learning *all* deficiencies supplies,
- ‘ And teaches e’en the *weakest* to be *wise*.
- ‘ Then *labour*—thus thou *full* amends shalt make 95
- ‘ For *natural* defects.’ O gross mistake!

From toil, I grant, some aid we may expect,

But ne’er shall conquer *natural* defect.

Strive as we *may*, endeavour all we *can*

To counter-act, and vary *Nature’s* plan, 100

Still, spite of *all*, she keeps her *sov’reign* way,

Nor yields to *Art* the honour of her *sway*.

Nature to *Art* gave *birth*—and say, shall *she*

The *slave* commence of whom she caus’d to *be*?

’Gainst

'Gainst her own *wisdom* shall she prove a *tool*,

105

And mar her *purpose* to indulge a *fool*?

The bulk of Life's affairs ask no *great* parts,

And little or of *sciences* or *arts*:

Labour, mere *labour*, is the grand demand;

Some things the *head* must do, but more the *hand*.

110

The *humblest* tenement Content enjoys,

In *raising*, many labourers employs;

While *amplest* piles Ambition can erect,

Ask in *designing* but *one* architect.

'CAUSE most are shallow, say we *Nature* fails?

120

Her *wisdom*, rather say, as *much* prevails

Where her stream oozes thro' the *narrowest* souls,

As where in *fullest* tides her bounty rolls.

'Tis not she *sinks*, because she lifts not *all*;

She *seems* indeed, but *only* seems, to fall:

125

To *one*, *great* end diversifies creation,

Supports and governs by *subordination*;

Here

Here high, there low ; now calm, and now a storm ;
 Various in *means*, in *purpose* uniform :
 Each rule of Nature's an *unerring* rule,
 And when she *makes*, she always *means* a fool.

WHAT if each age ten thousand Pitts produce,
 And gives no R——s for common use ?
 Some two or three can chaunt the Cockpit note,
 But Government three hundred wants to vote :
 What's a whole Cabinet, tho' e'er so wise,
 Devoid of P——s for timely lyes ?

In this great town, (region of worldly cares !)
 What thousands thrive by only vending wares !
 While many a son of Genius, and of Science,
 In richest merit finds a poor reliance !
 See thro' the world the observation hold—
 The way of dulness is the way of gold.
 The reason's plain—all—craftsmen, 'squires, and kings—
 Need more of common than ingenious things.

A poem, song, or picture, now and then,

May strike the fancied taste of dullest men:

But vulgar lux'ries come in constant play;

Dress and good-living triumph ev'ry day.

SINCE then, of life's conveniences, the sum

150

Must from mere industry, not Genius, come,

Dame Nature, in her wisdom, has thought fit,

To give to most a plenteous lack of wit;

To stint them to their necessary light,

Keep to it's proper bound their mental fight,

155

That, only seeing their own narrow course,

(As blinkers help to guide the packer's horse)

They may not to eccentric objects stray,

But keep the beaten tenor of their way.

DID Genius fall the lot of ev'ry one,

160

How wou'd the bus'ness of the world be done?

If all were wits, who'd wreath the poet's bays?

Originals, who furnish up old plays?

HA.

D

What

What H——ts pillage for us *Gallic scenes*? A
 And what become of all our *Magazines*? 165 M
 All *first-rate artists*, who'd supply the town,
 With *striking likenesses* at *Half-a-crown*? 165 M
 Our dramatists, all *Sheridans* and *Colmans*,
 Our players, *Kings* and *Kembles*, *Popes* and *Holmans*; 165 M
 Who shou'd enrich the stage with *Fontainbleaus*? 170 M
 What D——s speak so well with *half a nose*? 170 M
 Or if, in *music*, Genius favour'd all, 170 M
 Who set the *yearly jingle* of *Vauxhall*? 170 M
 To *hatch-potch poetry*, give *airs hotch-potch*, 170 M
 Coin *English jargon*, and baptize it *Scotch*? 175 M
New set this month, it's fond composer's pride; 175 M
 By the cloy'd public, *next month, set aside*. 175 M
 All *Stanleys*, *Arnolds*, *Battishills*, and *Cooks*, 175 M
 What shou'd we do for H——ns, and for H——ks?
 Could all *compose*, what D——ys shou'd *compile*? 180 M
 What D——es do *great things*, in a *little stile*? 180 M
 Display their *tiny parts* in *alterations*, 180 M
New set old tunes, and spin out *variations*? 180 M

All parsons, learned bishops, who wou'd preach? 180
 All qualified, who condescend to teach? 185
 If all great lawyers, lifted to the bar,
 What lesser rogues shou'd bid their neighbours jar?
 Into their minds the legal frenzy pour;
 Or, found fomented, still foment the more?
 All at the top, the top who shall support? 190
 Who drive the sheep up to the fleecing court?
 If all physicians, who's to mix the drug?
 What the grave face, wise wig, well-practis'd shrug,
 If still no pothecary adds his part,
 T'enforce the recipe; and reach the heart? 195
 Say, what the use of surest precepts giv'n,
 If still in vain the patient sighs—for heav'n?

EACH has his part in what his talents suit;
 This shou'd design, and that but execute:
 This sort the seed, by those the earth be till'd; 200
 That give the plan, and these the structure build.

EACH of one chain is but a diff'rent link,
 Whether his task to execute, or think :
 Each in his office bears some useful part ;
 And toil's as indispensable as art. 205

Pity all see not Nature's plain design ;
 Not keep their station in the mental line :
 By less'ning links the varying chain is bound,
 In mazy turnings winds and winds around ;
 Hence, meeting, least with greatest will compare,
 Nor know how many circles off they are. 210
 By force of application all will draw
 Blessings from Nature against Nature's law ;
 Still toil and tease, as, by downright assault,
 They'd make her mend, by punishing her fault : 215
 But thus attack'd, she fortifies her rules,
 And fools, still plodding, grow the duller fools.

E'EN Pope, who modestly imputes to care,
 The charms that in his verse shine ev'ry where,

Proves

Proves, in his very *compliment* to toil,

220

Such flow'rs cou'd only spring in such a soil.

O HAPPY Bard! Ah, how much *happier yet*,
 Had but *due shades* oppos'd the *lights of wit!*
 Hadst thou for *thine* the plan of *Nature chose*,
 And shewn the *nettle* to commend the *rose!* 225
 Just giv'n the *sample* to the *rule* you drew,
 And been contented not to *over-do!*

WHY by redundant toil are *plain things* forc'd,
 And from their *own simplicity* divorc'd?
 Whether the subject, reptiles, gods, or men,
 Why *all things* blazon where you turn your pen?
 To the *first lustre* see *all parts* aspire,
 And own e'en *beauty, unrelev'd*, may tire. 230

THINK a whole year beams out *one scene of flow'rs*,
 Warm suns, soft airs, and amaranthine bow'rs; 235

And fay, if flow'rs, if sunshine, and soft airs,
 And all the charms the loveliest season wears,
 Can yield the transport of returning spring,
 Shaking new fragrance from fresh-scented wing,
 When Earth, reliev'd from storms and freezing skies, 240
 Feels from her womb a new creation rise ;
 When Summer follows with maturing sun,
 And takes of Spring the task she had begun ;
 When Autumn's pencil, varying still the scene,
 Ripens the fruit, re-paints the changing green ; 245
 When Winter, with a rougher, bolder hand,
 Heaves the fwell'd flood, or whitens o'er the land :
 When these in Nature's sapient order roll ;
 Oppos'd, tho' join'd; tho' sev'ral, one great whole !
 Strike the charm'd eye, and teach th' enraptur'd heart, 250
 To feel what circling seasons can impart !

GREAT DRYDEN view! see Art not rule, but aid;
 The objects Nature's, Art's the light and shade :

See

See them in due subordination join ;
As that strikes out, this perfect the design. 255

Still as each thought supplies the various rhyme,
Th' according stile it's nature suits, and clime.

If it demand a bright and burning sun,
Their blazing course the vivid numbers run :

Would this but dazzle? Should less force inspire? 260

Less glowing language sheds it milder fire:
Would it in cooler shade more grace receive?

A soft recess the faint expressions give :
Does it, quite plain, a lowly station ask?

The homely line performs it's humble task : 265

Would it more nat'ral in the medium flow?
The verse accommodates; nor high, nor low :

While, noble! it in higher sphere wou'd shine,
He elevates it in a stile divine!

See Nature's pencil, in the hand of Art, 270
Nature's own spirit to the work impart,

And the bold figures, living! from the canvas start!

See

See Learning's body kindled all to soul !
 See the bright flame of Genius wrap the whole !
 And say, had Nature this great soul denied,
 If Toil the inspiration had supplied ?

Most minds, by Nature bound to such a line,
 Only within that sphere can ever shine :
 Nay, even there, peep out in rays so small,
 We cannot, fairly, say they shine at all. 280
 Some, like the Sun, whose worlds are form'd to light ;
 Shine ev'ry where, and ev'ry where are bright :
 Others, if o'er their boundaries they rove,
 Sink, and extinguishing, mere meteors prove.
 For a short space some roll their transient fire,
 Just kindle to a flash, and then expire !
 Some a long course in Nature's medium shine,
 Nor yet to deaden, nor to blaze, incline.
 These, independent, in themselves are bright ;
 Those form'd but to reflect another's light ; 290
 Some,

Some, like fierce comets, *rapid move, and far;*
 Like them, again, returning *regular;*
 Relume their fire at *Relaxation's sun,*
 And then again as wide a circuit run.

WHEN we a spark wou'd rouze to *active flame,* 295
 We only need to *fan* and *feed* the same :
 Once rais'd, the more we heap the kindling pyre,
 Sparks *thicker* rise, and *fiercer* flames aspire;
 Catch at each part, their growing vigour raife,
 And spread, and burst into an *universal blaze!* 300
 Not so the *mind*—A spark found only there,
 We *less* must heap, and with a *nicer care*:
 The *mental* spark but such a pile will light,
 Bear but *such chafing*, and but burn *so bright.*
 The fuel *duly measur'd* to it's *pow'r,* 305
 If faintly *glimm'ring*, may exist it's *hour* ;
 Illumine all it's *little pyre* around,
 And, by it's *own*, shew *kindred sparks* their bound.

But if, *ambitious*, it wou'd spread, (Behold !
 Behold the fate of little *sparks* too bold !)
Stifled by what it vainly strives to light,
 It's rashness brings it's own *eternal night.*

Good Doctor Dormant, whom in youth we knew,
 Had some *small spirit*, some *small Genius* too ;
 And with *proportion'd learning* promis'd fair, 315
 To do *some credit* to the past'ral care :
 Nay, pow'rs beyond *most parfons* might have reach'd,
 And kept *awake* his audience while he *preach'd* ;
 Or, (greater latitude of praise to take)
 Had preach'd as tho' he were *himself awake* : 320
 But, lo ! with erudition *overcharg'd*,
 And nothing but his *waist* and *wig* enlarg'd,
 With *letter'd lumber*, heap'd and heap'd about,
 Self-knowledge *quench'd*, knowledge of men *shut out* :
 Nay, *Learning's self*, pres'd down by it's own weight 325
 Too close to kindle, or irradiate,

The

The spark that in *due time* had *somewhat shone*,
 Instead of *brighter*, quite *obscure* is grown ;
 And for some judgment, spirit, and ideas,
 Only a huge, *dead stock* of words appears.

330

AND now I hear some *pedants* say—‘ What, then,
 ‘ Is *Genius* all that’s to distinguish men ?
 ‘ Shall Wit o’er *Learning* dare to mount his seat ?
 ‘ Illit’rate Wit the *sacred Sisters* greet ?’
 No—Genius e’er so *great*, I still confess,
 Can never know, *alone*, it’s happiness :
 As flames unfed, must transiently expire,
 So without *learning* must the *mental fire* :
 Nay, as more bright, more general the flame,
 More fuel must supply and feed the same ;
 E’en so the *mind* the *wider* it expands,
 More knowledge for it’s *maintenance* demands.

335

340

GENIUS and Learning, in *each other* blest,
 In him a *manly* strength, in her confess’d

That

That pliant *Modesty* which heightens beauty, 345
 And adds to charms of *frame*, the grace of *duty* ;
 Which points, yet *delicately* points, the way ;
 So rules, by *yielding* she preserves her sway ;
 While *Genius* triumphs with a *gen'rous* pride,
 And, while he's *guided*, seems to *lead* his guide— 350
 Learning with *Wit*, thus *happily* combin'd,
 Will, *must*, yield models of the *noblest* kind ;
 The parents by their *progeny* be known ;
 Their *blended* qualities *exalted* shewn :
 Learning by *Wit* inspir'd, to *Wit* gives *aid*, 355
 While *Wisdom*, *smiling*, owns the league she made.

WHERE is the man who learning wou'd *explode*?
We only reason 'gainst the *gen'ral mode* ;
 The dealing it to *geniuses* and *fools*,
 By *equal* portions, and *unvaried rules*. 360

It's *present* influence, let us then survey ;
 See who it *aids*, and who it *leads astray* ;

How

How oft but fills the gap of youthful years,
 And then for *trade*, or *pleasure*, disappears :
 Yet how more frequent holds up *human pride*,
 And *follies*, nature, *unprovok'd*, wou'd bide.
 Among the sons of *Lit'rature*, how few
 Up to the *fountain-head* the stream pursue !
 Or, to the *fountain-head* *pursuing*, yet
 How fewer taste the *sense*, or feel the *wit* !
 How many with the *dregs* become unsound ?
 (For where the spring so *clear* but dregs are found ?)
Where dregs, my friend, *more* plenteous found than here,
 Tho' drawn by *you*, no spring is found so *clear*)
 How many, with their *learning*, *error* drink,
 And make the brink of *knowledge*, *folly's* brink ;
 At ev'ry draught some wholesome thought *repress*,
 And only suck in *pride* and *idleness* !

SOME are to barbarism so strong inclin'd
 By *nature*, they can never be refin'd ;

Or arts, or letters, teach them *what you will*,
 You only give to vice *new pow'rs and skill*:
 Bound or to *frailty's*, or to *folly's* side,
 Or *vice*, or *folly*, still their conduct guide ;
 While each accomplishment bestows the art, 385
Abler to play the *fop's* or *villain's* part.
 With *some small parts*, but more of *vulgar pride*,
 (*The common basis* of each fault beside)
 They *not without success* to study bend,
 (If *that's* success which serves not *Virtue's* end) 390
New vices, with each *new acquirement*, shew ;
 Or as in *knowledge*, so in *pertness* grow ;
 Bid *Confidence* break down each *decent fence*,
 And *Learning* hold the torch to *Insolence*.
 For *learning* heav'n cou'd never *these design*, 395
 Since *worse than vain*, our efforts to *refine*.
 Their *native*, gross deformity of soul,
 (As *subterraneous vapours* *harmless* roll)
 Beneath the veil of *ignorance* might lie
Unnotic'd, nor offend th' *escaping eye*. 400

But

But, meant by *erudition* to be grac'd,
 And in the light of *lit'rature misplac'd*,
 Each fault's not only brought to *public view*,
 But what *exposes magnifies* it too.
 So when gross matter in the *earth* is pent, 405
 Th' *exhaling beams* of *Phœbus* give it vent;
 Draw it from *darkness* to the *open day*,
 (From where, *confin'd*, it *inoffensive lay*).
 And as it issues from the *teeming earth*,
 Not merely give the *sulphur* second birth, 410
 But as it, fuming, hovers o'er the ground,
 Spread it, by rarefaction, *all around*.

SOME boys, at *most*, seem only sent to school,
 To compliment the *universal rule*;
 Just thro' a certain course of study run, 415
 Just to return to where they first begun:
 Acquire a little with a deal of pain,
 For bus'ness to resign it all again:
Just

Just as their *sisters*, in their *maiden lives*,
Learn *music*—to forget it when they're *wives*. 420

BEHOLD them, tolerable scholars made,
Throw by their *books* to make a way for *trade*:
At *certain age*, see them of *courfe* begin
To *let out* learning, to *let* commerce *in*:
Till from *all* lit'rature's attractions wean'd, 425
And losing e'en the *little* they had glean'd,
In spite of *all* their *Greek*, and all the *praise*
Acquir'd by *mistraining* Latin plays,
They turn out just as *wise*, and just as *bright*,
As those who've only learn'd to *read* and *write*. 430

AGAT the goldsmith, when he first left school,
Could translate *Virgil*, and was *no small fool*:
Nay, was so good a *Grecian*, that, 'tis said,
Homer with *decent fluency* he read.
But now with *other things* that *head* is fill'd, 435
Than who stole *Helen*, or who *Hector* kill'd;

The narrow cell but for one tenant made,
 Could not contain both *lit'rature* and *trade*.
 Trade's skilful hand soon therefore op'd a door
 For Learning's quickly-disappearing store ; 440
 Drew from his head what knowledge it might hold,
New furnish'd, and *trepann'd*, the skull with gold.
 Now Traffic holds the seat where Learning fate,
 And now a diamond casket is that pate :
 Where Homer shot but an ideal blaze, 445
 Now real brilliants dart congenial rays :
 Where gold in golden verse cou'd only flow,
 There sterl'ing gold supplies it's solid glow :
 No more a place there Greece or Troy maintain,
 No longer burden his now alter'd brain ; 450
 If any Troy, Troy-weight now bears the sway ;
 And Greece, that conquer'd Troy, to gold gives way.

THESE a small few !—The greater, wiser part,
 Display their talents in a bolder start !

H

To

No

To brighter objects than dull commerce turn; 455
 For nobler wreaths than Croesus' dare to burn!
 Retain their learning, and, before, forget
 Their bus'ness, lest the world forget their wit:
 'Mongst Guildhall's patriots, or Coachmaker's smarts,
 Unwind their learning, and display their parts. 460
 No matter whether trade goes ill or well;
 Enough for them, that they in pride excel!
 And, strange to say! no few of modern failures
 Originate at Paul's, or Merchant-Taylor's.

Cits, scholars now and rhetoricians grown, 465
 Claim more than ancient titles for their own.
 Once, all their care to be well soak'd and fed;
 The belly fill'd, still empty went the head:
 Careless of praise at council each took part;
 Nor got, the day before, his speech by heart. 470
 Cool, if not rational, he spoke his say;
 And equal orators bore equal sway.

No thirst of letter'd reputation yet
 Had e'en begot th' *idea* of *city-wit* ;
 No brawling knew they loud as at the bar ; 475
 No blows *uncivil* bred a *civil-war* :
 Each talk'd and *doz'd* in turn, and that was all ;
 No *pens* and *ink* yet flew about the *Hall* :
 No neighbour to despoil his neighbour fought,
 But all departed with the *wigs* they brought ; 480
 No heads surcharg'd in *raſſ dispute* then mix'd,
 Like *Shrovetide cocks* on leaden basis fix'd ;
 In *weight of belly* each his ballast found,
 And, *light at top*, erectly kept his ground.

BUT this *no more*!—We must not now, alack ! 485
 Seek the decorum of a cent'ry back :
 All *learned* now, and consequently *wits*,
 Fall *cureless* into strong-conceited fits ;
 For liberty, and dear *diurnal fame*,
 Rush to debate with more than patriot flame : 490

To

To Council call'd, so furiously engage,
They scarce at *table* shew a greater rage !

AT *Merchant-Taylor's* bred, Hardwareman cries—
 ‘ Shall we than men of *Paul's* be deem'd less wise ? ’

Or, bred at *Paul's*—‘ Shall we in knowledge yield, 495
 ‘ And give to *Merchant-Taylor's* men the field ? —
 ‘ Here ! where's my gown, lamp, paper, ink, and pen ?
 ‘ Sleep is for *private*, not for *public*, men :
 ‘ To my dear country I'll this night devote,
 ‘ To-morrow's speech indite, and get by rote.’ 500

By his wife question'd why he keeps from bed—
 ‘ *England's salvation*, child, is in my head !
 ‘ How we may rise, her *Genius* whispers still ;
 ‘ But all depends upon my care and skill : }
 ‘ *Britannia calls* ! and I must do her will.’ 505
 So when poor Crispin, crazy for the praise
 Of *pulpit* eloquence, to preach essays ;
 His 'prentice clerk ; his *cobling-stool* his stage ;
 Flies to the fields with *tabernacle* rage !

With

With Rowland's skill erects the orbs of sight,
 Or turns them, *ravish'd!* on the *inward light!*
 Forgets Will's shoulders are but flesh and bone,
 Or thinks at home he's *hammering* on his *stone* ;
 Now faith, *all-saving faith*, proclaims aloud !
 Now deals damnation on the trembling crowd !
 Ask'd why for *preaching* he deserts his *stall*,
 (Bred at Moorfields, or Tot'nam) hear him bawl,
 ' Because as how I feels I has a *call* !'

510

515

}

SAY *moderns* what they will, we still shall find
 All knowledge but the *vesture* to the mind ;
 That, howe'er fine the *cloth*, or rich the *lace*,
 No *blockhead's wear* will ever give it *grace* :
 While Genius ! e'er so *coarsely* clad, still shews
 A *manner* ! and does *credit* to his *cloaths*.
 But as the mob no *nice* distinctions make,
 Exterior *glare* for *Quality* mistake,
 While *Quality herself*, in plain array,
 Passes *unnotic'd* thro' the public way ;

520

525

Since only *Taste* can ever draw the line,
 'Tween where the *trappings*, where the *manners* shine ; 530
 Where from *within*, no rays the *Graces* shoot,
 Where *Elegance* but asks a *better suit*,
 So few discern the *insuperable fence*,
 'Tween *only ignorance* and—*want of sense*.
 Who're deeply learned, must be deeply wise, 535
 Wisdom in *theory*, not *practice*, lies :
 Who know the right, are wise, e'en in the *wrong* ;
 Tho' weak their *conduct*, still their *judgment* strong.
 Who little know ; that little e'er so well
Employ'd, each o'er-charg'd blockhead shall excel 540
 His boldest, happiest effort : and by shewing
 The diff'rence between *doing* and but *knowing*,
 Secure the plaudits due to *native merit*,
 And seize the palm which *Genius* shou'd inherit.

SOME we both know, who, train'd in Folly's walk, 545
 Blunder thro' life, and while they're *stumbling*, talk

Of *rectitude*; and place all *human reason*
 In words so join'd, things done in such a season;
 In knowing right from wrong, tho' all their life
 Is with that knowledge one continual strife: 550
 Their *doctrines* tell how easy 'tis to *preach*,
 Their *lives* how hard to *practise* what they *teach*.

' Who know the right, can do the right at *will*;
 ' Knowledge the pow'r, the virtue and the skill.
 ' Who can *return*, have privilege to *stray*; 555
 ' Nor do they *err* who know the better way.
 ' To know's the sense—they're wise who wisdom see—
 ' To know what's right, is in the right to be!

AND is it then enough we wisdom *view*?
 Is to *distinguish* all we have to do? 560
 Will merely *separating* wrong from right,
 Teach to *refrain* from that, in this *delight*?
 Is it enough we *hear* but Reason's voice?
 No judgment necessary to direct our choice?

No

No grace, no sense, no talents wanting still,

565

To do, as well as understand her will ?

Merely the good and ill to justly paint,

Distinguishes the preacher, not the saint :

To know true wit from false, and only know it,

May form the critic, but ne'er made a poet.

570

WHEN to confirm his virtue and his knowledge,

His unspoil'd son Sir Tradewell sent to college,

And found, at his return, his education

But pedantry, and taste for dissipation,

We could not censors of his wit commence,

575

'Twas only ignorance, not want of sense.

The Knight, old-fashion'd, bred in those plain days,

When lust of pudding banish'd lust of praise;

When He was master of the noblest feat,

Who at a turtle-feast the most cou'd eat ;

580

When Dulness held at Guildhall quiet sway,

Or only rattled there on Lord May'r's Day ;

Ere

Ere honest, *fame-deluded* cits aspired
 To *rhet'ric*, and by *Woodfall's* praise were fir'd ;
 Ere *Nonsense* perk'd herself in *classic stays*, 585 IT
 And broke the lace in stretching for the bays :
 The Knight, home-bred, and still without the *polish*
 By which *wise moderns* ancient *rust* abolish ;
 Untaught, untrain'd in *Erudition's* schools,
 Stranger to *colleges*, and *college-rules* ; 590 W
 Who scarce had heard of *science* or *degree*,
 And knew no rule—except the *Rule of Three*—
 Thinking at *Oxford* Wisdom reign'd alone,
 (For how should he know *Dulness* shar'd the throne ?)
 Sent his son there to seek her for his guide, 595 A
 And fail'd—but fail'd with *reason* on his side.

BUT when his *Lordship*, with more knowledge stor'd
 Than deem'd by *peers* becoming in a *Lord* ;
 Knows what is *true nobility*—it's *end*—
Whence honours sprung—on what they *still depend*— 600 Y
 —*o* **K** *That*

That, Liberty and Virtue it's support,
No spot yields sweeter incense than a court;
 That once uncherish'd by their sun-like rays,
None droop so sudden as the titled bays—
 When my Lord, taught in this, knows well the right
 From wrong, yet errs in *Education's spite*:
 When such a lord instructs his rising heir,
 With high-born honours, meanest stains to wear;
 To boast that height which but a sound supports,
 Disdain a friendship where mere merit courts; 610
 To bear in mind that he's a *Noble Lord!*
 Born by untitled worth to be ador'd
 At humble distance—to avoid, not greet;
 Nor see her, shou'd he meet her in the street;
 But turn his back on her plebeian band— 615
 Yet take a villain gamester by the hand;
 Be 'bove th' approaches of the saucy poor,
 Unless first qualified—as pimp, or whore—
 Yet on occasion too, stoop e'er so low,
 If with the lordly view to make them so— 620

When

When thus my *lord* instructs his *heir* to run
 The course of *guilt*, ere *manhood's* is begun ;
 To drink, to rake, seduce, and throw the dice,
 With ev'ry *other* fashionable vice ;
 To make his claim to his *estate* more clear, 625
 To all his *follies* makes him too the heir ;
 Acts *wilfully* in Reason's *contradiction* ;
 Not only *errs*, but *errs* 'gainst *self-conviction* ;
 Nor claims the *want of knowledge* for defence—
 What is it—tell me—but the *want of sense*? 630

SURVEY the times, you'll find the *dullest elves*
 Have still the *best opinion* of themselves :
 Tho' void of understanding, as of *wit*,
 In *blessed self-conceit* they're happy *yet* ;
 That succedaneum *all* defects supplies ; 635
 With common *sense* and *that*, they all are *wise* :
 Nor *only wise*—Conceit provides them *wit* ;
 At council aids my *lord*, as well as *cit* :

By

By Cit, nor Lord, nor Parliament, nor Hall,

Monopoliz'd—but still enjoy'd by *all.* 640

Ev'ry profession feels alike it's aid,

And sons of rhet'ric spring from sons of trade:

All *now* too bright for *Traffic's* occupations,

Rush from their *own*, and seize the *upper stations:*

By dint of *confidence*, or dint of *gold,* 645

Usurp the heights Ability should hold:

While *Merit once dethron'd*, they *keep her down;*

And, how'er ill it fits them, *wear the crown.*

Tho' long, long fled the time since *bold Pretence*

First with his strong, invulnerable fence, 650

Guarded fond Inclination 'gainst th' attack

Of searching Diffidence, (still free to rack

*The breast of Genius; to inflict those *pains,**

Reserv'd, alas! for all who're curst with brains;

*Those poignant wounds which *scrup'lous* merit feels,* 655

Which scarce the world's just commendation heals;)

Tho' long, long gone the day since *Dulness* knew

(If e'er she did) the *pangs* which still accrue

From *self-critique*—yet never, *sure*, till now,

Did Confidence such *ample field* allow

670

To Vanity—Once in his own *small way*

To be the first, and bear *mechanic sway*,

Compass'd the *craftsman's* wish ; nor did he strive

By any but his *native* pow'rs, to thrive :

Now Emulation wild, and *past all bound*,

675

Soars to the *skies*, *disdainful* of the ground ;

While all (for *foreign fame* outrageous grown)

Would mount on *any* pinions but their *own*.

The Cooper scans the *planets*, knows their scope,

Bends *pliant nature* as he bends a *hoop* ;

680

Gallantly gives to *Venus* *Saturn's* moons,

And proves by *gravity* we raise balloons !

The Carpenter, turn'd architect, *designs* !

S—y harangues ; Dunces commence Divines !

Th' Apothecary makes *Castalian* doses !

685

And Madan turns Musician, and *composes* !

As some peculiar whim each coxcomb draws
 Aside, so diff'rent accidents the cause :
Unconscious, these at first are led astray ;
Those, of themselves ambitious, start away ! 690
 Some later catch this fever of conceit,
 Others in *infancy* imbibe it's heat.

WHAT parent but admires his children's *babble*,
 And sense and humour hears in all they *gabble*?
 Between papa and company hemm'd in, 695
 How Dicky's wit provokes the circling grin !
 And if 'mongst all the *rattle* of a day,
 One *random repartee* shou'd break it's way,
 Which the child neither *means* nor *understands*,
 What *laughing plaudits* ! and what *clap of hands* ! 700
 How oft the table bids the *joke* resound !
 The *standing bye-word* of a *whole year round* !

Does he, in some mere, *wanton whimsy*, snatch
 The *pencil*, and around the wainscot scratch—

‘ What

- ‘ What *rising genius* dawns in ev’ry stroke ! 705
 ‘ A painter born ! — See here — see there ! — Look, look !
 ‘ Let him go on, and ’gad ! ’tis all so well,
 ‘ No artist living but he shall excel.
 ‘ Shou’d he proceed, and take to *Humour’s school*,
 ‘ To what he’ll be, your *Rowlandson’s* a fool ; 710
 ‘ Or if for *portraits*, soon shall *Romney* yield,
 ‘ And even *Gainsborough* give up the field :
 ‘ For *history* ? Still shall he top the best ;
 ‘ To *Reynolds’* force join all the *truth* of *West* !

- Or does he draw the bow across the kit, 715
 And, *chance-directed*, some known passage hit,
 Enough ! ‘ The boy has a *surprizing ear* !
 ‘ Has he *not*, spouse ? — ‘ Indeed he *has*, my dear !
 ‘ What may we not expect from *such a son* ? — 720
 ‘ At least a *Cramer*, or a *Salomon* !
 ‘ A master he shall have, whate’er the cost ;
 ‘ A *downright sin* such genius shou’d be *lost* !

PERHAPS

PERHAPS grown up; (his earlier years all spent
 In those *vile* tricks which speak a vicious bent
 In *nature*; and by which we all foresee
 By what the *boy* is, what the *man* will be;) 725
 Perhaps, tho' *mean* in *parts*, for *trade* too *proud*,
 (In *pride* as well as *cunning* 'bove the *crowd*)
 He bends to *study*; and, thro' want of time,
 But *now* and *then* repeats a former crime: 730
 (While at his heart vice *still* retains it's *root*,
 And but retires more *vigorous* to shoot,
 When *rip'ning* *years* shall all it's strength display
Full-grown, nor *shrinking* from the eye of day)
 Perhaps, (for Dulness is to *Toil* allied, 735
 As *Craft* to Dulness, or as *both* to *Pride*;)
 Perhaps he labours, and as fierce a zeal —
 For *virtue*, as for *learning*, seems to feel:
 Ne'er from his *books*, but, plodding day and night,
 (As wond'rous *good*, as he is wond'rous *bright*) } 740
 Makes his *dup'd* father think now all is right:

Who

Who, *simple man!* unknowing *Nature's rules,*

And how she *qualifies* her *choicest fools*;

Who not amongst the *brightest wits* himself,

Confounds with wits each *pert*, each *artful elf*;

745

Sees *wisdom* in the *knav*, and *first-rate parts*,

Where *wiser men* see only *meanest arts*;

Finds Genius where but Av'rice' talons lurk,

By *Knav'ry* sharp'ned for *Dishonour's work*—

—*Knav'ry!* which wise men hate, the dull *adore*,

750

Comprising *all the fool*, and *something more*:

Vile, abject *Knav'ry!* ever on the watch

For what by *meanest methods* he may *catch*;

Whom he may best *surprise*, whose wit *defeat*,

(For none so *keen* but whom a *knav* shall *cheat*)

755

Whose *bonied cell* he safely shall deprive

Of it's *best sweets*, and leave a *ruin'd hive*:

Whose *loosen'd nest* shall offer to repair,

And keep together with a *guardian care*;

Friend-like, restore the *feathers* that are *flown*,

760

While, *Lawyer-like*, he's *feathering his own*—

His father, worse than ign'rant here, nay even
 Deeming this Knav'ry Genius, thinking Heaven
 Has *bleft* him with a son whose *sprightly pranks*
 Speak brilliant talents, and demand his thanks,
 For some great, due return, employs his search—
What?—Dick shall be a—pillar of the Church.

765

HENCE, and from other causes not more wise,
 The place of *Wisdom* many a knave supplies :
 Hence groan the arts beneath an *over-stock* ;
 Hence science feels the weight of many a block :
 Hence daily those are taught t'assume the *pallet*,
 Whose minds, *self-led*, had rose but to the *mallet*.
 Hence by themselves, *some politicians* made,
 Whom wiser Nature only meant for *trade* :
 Hence cowards by commissions rank with braves ;
 While *fools*, made *Lawyers*, think they rise to *Knaves* :
 Hence *authors*, with nor wit, nor sense, their own ;
 Critics with brains of *lead*, and hearts of *stone* :

770

775

Hence

Hence Nature's *great decorum* is annoy'd,

780

Hence half her *wisdom*, in *effect*, destroy'd:

And, by admitting each *pretending fool*,

Arts, arms, religion, turn'd to *ridicule*!

O FRIEND! whose ear I have detain'd *too long*;

Whose judgment bids me *tremble* for my song!

785

You, at whose bar I have the Age arraign'd,

(And, tho' in *rhime*, yet *feelingly* complain'd)

Say, am I right? or is my subject feign'd?

Is *letter'd Dulness* still for *Dulness known*?

Is *Genius* rais'd to *Reputation's throne*?

790

Are *highest posts* to *wisest heads* assign'd,

The *low* to talents of an *humbler kind*?

Are *blockheads* in their *native walks* content?

Is *Merit* cherish'd by *Encouragement*?

Say *this*, obedient I each word *retract*,

795

Renounce my sentiments, and yield to *fact*.—

But if you think with *me*, with *me* confess,

Folly but *more* herself in *Wisdom's dress*;

That

That fools in fewest words find best disguise,
 And, wise in silence, may seem really wise ; 800
 But if, in spite of Nature, spite of Fate,
 They will be *busy*, and they will be *great* ;
 Will dare to heights beyond their stretch of thought,
 Will *preach* and *teach* what first they shou'd be *taught* ;
 If, lost to all the little sense they have, 805
 They will exhibit more than Nature gave ;
 Will, rushing from their *sphere*, to heights arise,
 By Reason held as Sacred to the *Wise* ;
 Then, joining me, convince the erring elves,
 The more they'd raise, the more they sink themselves ; 810
 Yes—tell each coxcomb—tell him to his face,
 The fool's best knowledge is to know his place !



— FINIS.